

Tom Patti:

Contemporary Glass Sculpture

April 18-June 22, 1997

The Owens Corning World Headquarters at the Middlegrounds

In 1993 Owens Corning announced plans to move its World Headquarters from a building in downtown Toledo to a nearby site known as the Middlegrounds. Cesar Pelli, an internationally respected architect, was selected to design the new headquarters. From the beginning, Owens Corning was interested in a building that allowed for a collaboration between the architect and an artist, seeing it as a way of expressing the corporation's ongoing commitment to innovation in industry while providing an inspirational workplace for its employees.

Early in the planning for the new building, sculptor Tom Patti was invited by Glen Hiner, the chief executive officer of Owens Corning, to collaborate with Pelli. Already known for his minimalistic laminated and fused glass sculptures, this commission enabled Patti to explore on a grand scale the same issues of simplified form, the interaction of positive and negative space, strong horizontal or vertical line, and limited color that have been his hallmarks over the past 25 years. In addition, during his career Patti's passion for technology led him to incorporate high performance industrial equipment in the creative process. The Owens Corning commission allowed Patti to explore this dialogue further as well as to pursue his interest in the role of glass in architecture. At the same time he responded to the challenge of creating a work environment conducive to creativity.

Previous Work

Since the 1970s Patti has been recognized for his small, elegant sculptures, averaging approximately 4 to 6 inches in height and composed of clearly defined layers of fused and laminated plate glass into which a blown bubble was introduced. The bubbles vary in size. In the earliest pieces, the layered plates of glass were expanded to form functional vessel-like forms (no. 1). Over the years, the bubbles diminished in size, ultimately becoming simply soft, sensuous elements within harder-edged, linear compositions (no. 11). Patti frequently enhanced the linearity of the fused glass layers, either tubating the surface by cutting channels in the glass (no. 3) or by placing glass fibers among the layers of plate glass (no. 7).

Patti has always said that in his small sculptures, many of which are architectonic in nature, he develops the ideas for his larger sculptures or architectural commissions. Thus, when Patti was awarded the Owens Corning commission, he had essentially developed his vocabulary.

The Role of Color

In the works from the first 15 years of his career Patti has largely explored the color of commercial plate glass, creating works in gray, brown, and green glass. When he became interested in more intense color in the early 1990s, he was attracted to shades of red, symbolic of blood (no. 9). This vocabulary permeates the Owens Corning commission. The colors of the commission are generally soft with black, pale blues, pinks, and yellows predominating—the pink referring directly to Owens Corning's Fiberglas® insulation—but red accents abound, tying Patti's work to Pelli's color scheme for the building.

Layout of the Owens Corning Installation

Patti's installation consists of exterior glass panels that surround the doors to the main vestibule, the lobby entry, and the entrances leading into the central building. He also created a 300-foot transom frieze along the central corridor of the first floor, two back-lit panels framing a staircase to the fitness center, a room divider within the Leadership Area, and two courtyard entrances that lead to enclosed gardens off the ground floor.

The Owens Corning commission is composed of cast and laminated panels formed by the innovative use of advanced technology. Patti related the theme of the installation entirely to industry by focusing throughout on Owens Corning's prominence in the field of glass fiber technology. Strong horizontal and vertical lines predominate, emphasizing both the theme of fiber glass and the aesthetic seen in Patti's earlier work. In the cast panels of the vestibule, in the transom frieze, and in the courtyard entrances, Patti recreates the strong warp and weft patterns found in the molecular structure of fiber glass and its fabrication process. The most frequently used motif throughout the commission is, however, the strands of fiber glass which Patti

sandwiches between sheets of glass. Sometimes using long, twisted, curling strands and other times incorporating short-looped threads, the artist introduces these into the two-dimensional panels, capturing the same organic feeling that erupts unexpectedly in his small, minimalist, three-dimensional sculptures.

About the Artist

Born in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, in 1943, Tom Patti received his bachelor's and master's degrees in industrial design from Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York, in the late 1960s. He became involved with glass after taking a two-week course in traditional glass blowing techniques at Penland School of Crafts in North Carolina in 1970. Having established a glass studio in Pittsfield, he began to explore the use of industrial processes to create small fused and laminated plate glass forms. Patti's work gained international recognition in 1979 when one of his small works was selected as the cover image for the Corning Museum of Glass's exhibition catalogue *New Glass: A Worldwide Survey*, which presented the first major review of contemporary studio glass. Although best known for his small sculptures, since 1982 Patti has received several large-scale public and private architectural commissions, primarily for walls and windows of fused and laminated plate glass.

Essay by Davira S. Taragin, curator of 20th century glass and administrator of special exhibitions

This exhibition and brochure were made possible by Owens Corning.

Front—Top to bottom: No. 14, photo courtesy George Erm; No. 9, photo by Tim Thayer; No. 10, photo by Tim Thayer; No. 4, photo by Larry Rosenberg

Exhibition Checklist

No. 1

Banded Opal with Gray, 1976

From the artist's collection

No. 2

Modulated Air Frame, 1977-78

From the artist's collection

No. 3

Banded Clear, 1978

From the artist's collection

No. 4

Tubated Gray Riser, 1979

The Toledo Museum of Art,

Purchased with funds from the Libbey
Endowment, Gift of Edward
Drummond Libbey, 1979.83

No. 5

*Compacted Planular Bronze
and Green*, 1981-82

From the artist's collection

No. 6

*Compacted Solarized
Horizontal Blue*, 1985-86

From the artist's collection

No. 7

*Compacted Solarized Double
Light Blue with Pinlines*, 1987

From the artist's collection

No. 8

*Compound Ascending Starphire®
with Burgundy and Line*, 1989

From the artist's collection

No. 9

Split Ascending Red, 1990

Lent by The Saxe Collection

No. 10

*Bronze Lumina Echo with
Red*, 1993

Lent by Glen and Ann Hiner

No. 11

Starphire® Particle, 1992-94

The Toledo Museum of Art,
Gift of Ann and Glen Hiner,
1995.10

No. 12

Grid with Diagonal Cones, Black
and Orange Fiber, 1995-96

From the artist's collection

No. 13

Owens Corning Lobby Entrance,
Vertical Blue and Green Grid with
Parallel Red Fiber, 1995-96

From the artist's collection

No. 14

*Planular Starphire® with Azurlite
Diagonal and Orange*

Owens Corning Fiber, 1996

From the artist's collection

No. 15

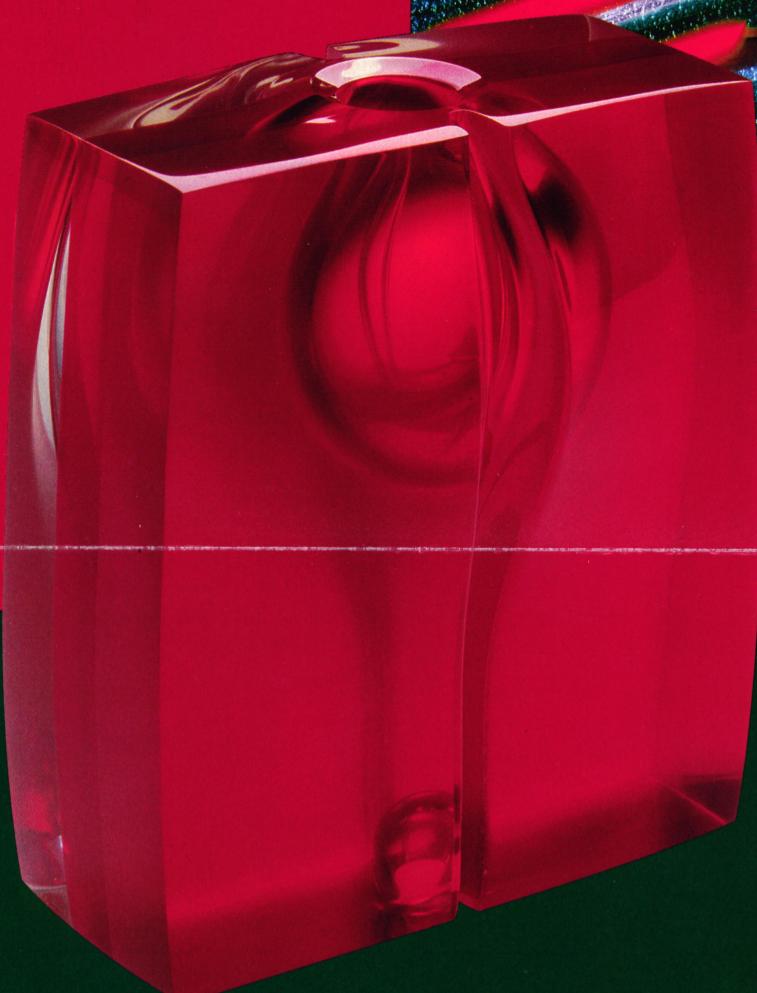
*Blue Progression with Green
Strand*, 1996

From the artist's collection



Owens Corning World Headquarters

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The Toledo
Museum of Art

